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THE CONDOR

A Magazine of
Western Ornithology

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EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Editorial acknowledgment is hereby made to Mr. J. R. Pemberton for his efficient service in compiling the Index which concludes the current volume of THE CONDOR.

Two Californians went East to attend the American Ornithologists' Union congress held in Philadelphia this year, Mr. Joseph Mailliard and Mr. J. Eugene Law. A wire (November 13) has come from the former, announcing the election to Fellowship, of Mr. Harry S. Swarth. This is a well-deserved recognition of the high grade of Mr. Swarth's systematic work on Western birds. The number of Fellows in the A. O. U. is restricted to fifty. There are now six A. O. U. Fellows residing west of the Mississippi.

The *Ibis* for April contains an article of unusual worth, by C. F. M. Swynnerton, on the coloration of the mouths and eggs of birds. The significance in some cases seems to be clearly that of warning, there

being an accompaniment of bright color or conspicuous pattern with disagreeable taste or odor, such as is proven to discourage attention from potential enemies. Thus the older idea of a directive meaning must in part be supplanted. Here is a line of observation well worth taking up by field ornithologists in America.

Alice Hall Walter, in the school department of September *Bird-Lore*, utters some timely warnings in regard to current methods of popularizing bird study. She has clearly perceived an unfortunate tendency which can only be counteracted by repeated warnings such as she sounds. The trend of her remarks is indicated by the following quotations. "The superficial student, interested only in the popular side of ornithology, is apt to shun the trained ornithologist's method, to balk at his standard of thoroughness. . . . To be unable to concentrate one's attention upon a single problem which may be solved by careful observation" is a serious defect, "resulting inevitably in a lowered standard and a circumscribed acquaintance with bird-life." Whenever this kind of bird-study "tends to a sentimental, inaccurate and uninspired conception of the place of birds in nature and their value to man, it deserves the criticism of having degenerated into a study which cannot hold a secure place . . . " in schools or anywhere else, and is no longer worth encouraging.

The death of Lieutenant-Colonel E. Alexander Mearns took place at Washington, D. C., on November 1, in the 61st year of his age. Mearns is known to western ornithologists more especially through his field work along the Mexican boundary. Many valuable articles on southwestern birds have appeared from his pen.

F. E. L. BEAL AND ECONOMIC ORNITHOLOGY IN CALIFORNIA

Our present knowledge of the food habits of California birds is in a large measure due to the painstaking work of Foster Ellenborough Lascelles Beal, Assistant, United States Biological Survey, who for many years devoted considerable attention to the economic relations of the birds of this State. The extent and importance of this work is emphasized anew by the news of Professor Beal's death, which took place at his home in Branchville, Maryland, on October 1, 1916, in his seventy-seventh year. From the fact that he was an honorary member of the Cooper Ornithological Club, and in view of his accomplishments in economic ornithology, it is fitting that a short review of Professor Beal's work in California appear in THE CONDOR at this time.

When the United States Department of Agriculture began investigations into the food habits of California birds, Professor Beal was sent to this State and placed in charge of the work. His studies were planned with a view to obtaining an accurate determination of the economic status of every species of California bird that inhabits orchards, in order that it might be possible for the fruit grower to discriminate between friends and foes, with suggestions as to remedial measures for saving fruit from destructive species. Professor Beal spent within the State the fruit seasons of 1901, 1903 and 1906, in all a period of about nineteen months, collecting stomachs of the various birds and

and conditions in California appear in the introductory paragraphs. In the treatment of each species evidence of two kinds is given, statements of ranchers, and results of stomach examinations. In the conclusions reached, stress is laid upon the nature of the yearly and seasonal food, summaries of which are given for each species. The second part, issued in 1910, treats of thirty-three additional species. Only four California birds are finally blacklisted on economic grounds, these four being the two bluejays, the Linnet and the Red-breasted Sapsucker.

"How birds affect the orchard" (1900) and "The relation of birds to fruit growing in California" (1904) were two Year-book publications also resulting directly from work

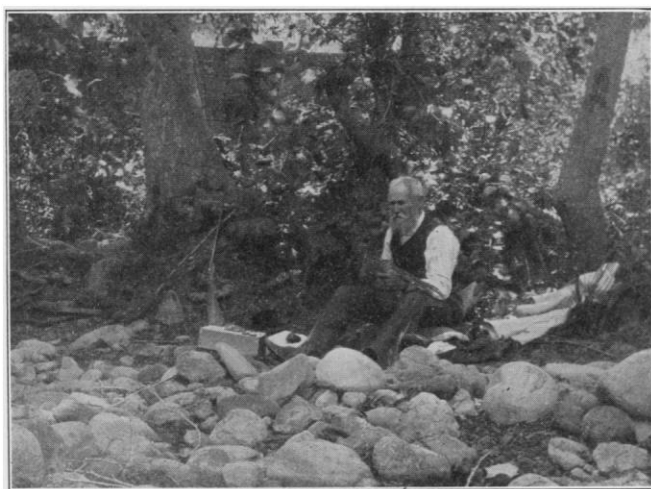


Fig. 57. PROFESSOR F. E. L. BEAL ON ONE OF HIS VISITS TO CALIFORNIA. AT LUNCH IN THE SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS, SEPTEMBER 4, 1901. PHOTO TAKEN BY W. OTTO EMERSON.

investigating conditions in fruit-growing sections. The larger part of the time was spent at Hayward, Alameda County, in the Pajaro Valley, Santa Cruz County, and at Pasadena, Los Angeles County. The co-operation of scientific collectors was also enlisted, with the result that many additional bird's stomachs were sent to Washington.

As a result of this work, there were published under Professor Beal's authorship, two bulletins entitled "Birds of California in relation to the fruit industry" (U. S. Dept. Agric., Biol. Surv., Bull. 30; *ibid.*, Bull. 34). The first, published in 1902, treats of the Linnet and thirty-seven other species of birds. Some general statements regarding the depredations of birds in fruit orchards,

in this State. Guarded statements like the following are characteristic of Mr. Beal's work: "The value of their [the birds'] work in dollars and cents is difficult of determination, but careful study has brought out much of practical importance in ascertaining approximately to what degree each species is harmful or helpful in its relation to the orchard." The fair treatment he accorded both sides in the controversy regarding the economic value of birds, won support for his standpoint and developed interest in his work.

In succeeding bulletins such as "Food of the woodpeckers of the United States", "Food of our more important flycatchers", and several briefer reports, additional infor-

mation on the food habits of California birds is given.

The economic work of Professor Beal came at a time when any esthetic or economic value that a bird might have was entirely overshadowed by depredations made more obvious by the conditions existing in a new country. His bulletins brought forward such conclusive evidence, however, as to convince most people that while birds sometimes inflict injury upon field crops and orchard trees and their products, they are often of great service in destroying enemies of the same crops, and that the aid so rendered in a subtle way may far more than offset the harm that is so apparent.

Mr. Beal's training was that of a scientist, for he was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was appointed Professor of Engineering at Iowa State College, later on becoming acting professor of zoology and comparative anatomy in the same institution. His interest in natural history finally led him in 1891, to join the staff of the United States Biological Survey. Throughout his connection with the Survey his interest was centered in economic ornithology. Twenty-five years of his life were therefore devoted to this branch of science, and most of the workers in the same field now with the Biological Survey received their training at his hands.

His many economic papers have clearly demonstrated the dollars and cents value of birds, and have greatly helped in building up the present-day sentiment favoring bird protection. The farmer, glad to receive help in distinguishing friend from foe, has been taught to seek conclusive proof of harm done before destroying any of the birds on his farm. To Professor Beal must be given also much of the credit for bringing the science of economic ornithology in America to its present high standard. In California he will be remembered as the pioneer and founder of economic ornithology, and as one who developed interest in, and protection for, insectivorous birds.

Mr. J. S. Hunter, who worked with Mr. Beal in the Pajaro Valley when investigations were being conducted in California, pays this tribute to him: "He was a man who did not seem to grow old, took an interest in everything, was thoroughly energetic and intensely interested in his work." With such characteristics it is little wonder that the name of Foster E. L. Beal is revered wherever known and that his publications are used as models by all younger workers.—H. C. BRYANT.

COMMUNICATIONS

Editor of THE CONDOR:

Will you kindly allow me to make an appeal through your columns to the ornithologists of the Pacific coast for photographs for use in the Life Histories of North American Birds?

I am planning to have this work illustrated with a series of the finest photographs I can obtain, showing the home life of every species possible.

I therefore want photographs illustrating breeding colonies, nesting sites, nests and eggs, and young birds. I am short of material on Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros and Cassin auklets, Xantus Murrelet and Pigeon Guillemot.

If any of your readers have good photographs illustrating the home life of any of the above, I should be glad to have them send me such as they are willing to contribute from which I can make selections. Each contributor will receive full credit for what photographs as are used.

Very truly yours,

A. C. BENT.

Taunton, Mass., October 10, 1916.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

RECENT ORNITHOLOGY FROM ALASKA AND EASTERN SIBERIA.—As a result of expeditions sent out from the United States into the far northwest, there have recently appeared several papers which add materially to our knowledge of the ornithology of the regions concerned. Three of these papers are to be commented upon here. The first, by Thayer and Bangs¹, deals with the collections of birds obtained by Johan Koren along the Arctic coast of East Siberia, west to the Kolyma River. Koren was sent out at the expense of Mr. John E. Thayer, and during two years, 1911-12, evidently gave a good account of himself.

Thayer and Bangs describe several new birds from the Kolyma country, as follows: *Lagopus lagopus koreni*, a Willow Ptarmigan differing from our North American races in size and shape of bill; *Circus cyaneus cernuus*, a Marsh Hawk smaller and paler than the European Harrier; *Budytes flavus plexus*, a race of the Yellow Wagtail; *Otocorys alpestris euroa*, a race of Horned Lark. The Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Hylocichla aliciae aliciae*) was found to be nesting as far west in eastern Siberia as the

(1) *Notes on the Birds and Mammals of the Arctic Coast of East Siberia*. Birds, by JOHN E. THAYER and OTTAM BANGS. Mammals, by GLOVER M. ALLEN. Proc. New England Zool. Club, v, April 9, 1914, pp. 1-66, 1 map.